

## **HOMILY for 3<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY of EASTER – Year C**

In today's Gospel, Jesus told Peter to feed his lamb & sheep. As I reflected on that message, I'm reminded of this cute story I'd like to share with you.

An anonymous letter writer sent his/her letter to the local newspaper editor complaining that church attendance made no sense. "I've gone for thirty years," he wrote, "and have heard something like three thousand sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time, as are the preachers for even bothering to deliver a sermon at all."

This letter started a real controversy on the op-ed page. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I've been married for thirty years. In that time, my wife has cooked some thirty-two thousand meals, but for the life of me, I can recall the menu of few if any of those meals. I do know, though, they all nourished me & gave me the strength I need to do my work. If my wife had not given me those meals, I'd be dead today!"

No more comments about sermon contents have appeared on the op-ed page after that!

After hearing the Gospel above, Jesus still tells me to feed His lamb & sheep; hence I'm obliged to deliver this sermon - one for each Mass – whether it's a waste of time or not! Anyway, since Easter morning, we've heard many reports of Christ's apparition. First, Mary Magdalen said that she had seen the risen Christ. Then, two disciples who were on their way to their hometown Emmaus also met the risen Christ when He broke bread & explained to them about the Scriptures. Last Sunday, we learned that the risen Christ showed up in a well-locked place where all the disciples hid from the authority. Even doubting Thomas had more than one chance to have a personal experience with the risen Christ. This weekend, we're told about another encounter between the risen Christ & His disciples. He showed up to help them when they caught nothing after a long, exhaustive fishing trip & felt defeated. They had no one in the world to turn to in their darkest, toughest moment. Surprisingly, the risen Christ showed up to give them some support & help them find a solution for their problem. Thankfully, they listened to His wise advice & caught so many fish that they could not haul the net in – one hundred fifty three of them! But, that's not all He did for them. He even prepared a meal & took care of their daily needs. The early disciples were so happy to see the risen Christ & receive help from Him. Wouldn't it be wonderful for future disciples like us to have an encounter with the risen Christ & get help from Him? Wouldn't it be a great blessing for us to have Him take care of our daily needs especially in desperate time?

Some Christians might not take the Easter miracle seriously, or believe that the risen Christ would still appear to them these days. This Sunday's Gospel tells us that the risen Christ still shows Himself to us & come to our aid especially in time of need. When the disciples ran out of options & caught nothing after a long night at sea, Jesus appeared to them & suggested a new solution. They listened to Him & caught so many fish afterward. He also helped them with their breakfast & took care of their daily needs. In today's First Reading, we learned how some of the early disciples ran into a problem with the authority & were persecuted for continuing His mission of salvation. The Lord did not abandon them & leave them fending for themselves. He came to their rescue & helped them fight the bogus charge that the authority made against them. He also gave them encouragement & guidance on their faith journey.

Now we know that the risen Christ has taken good care of His disciples. What would He expect them to do for Him? The second half of this Sunday's Gospel helps answer that question for us. It tells us what Jesus wants them to do for Him once they've received His blessings. Apparently Peter represented all the disciples when Jesus asked him if he really loved his Master. Peter answered Jesus three times that he loved Him. Jesus responded to him three times that he should take good care of His sheep. In other words, Jesus wanted Peter & all of His disciples to take good care of His Church once they've received His love & blessings. Similarly, He wants us to look after His Church & continue the mission of salvation that He left behind for us. He calls on us to help others find the way to the Easter miracle & the Kingdom of Heaven. That's our duty as we've heard how He commanded Peter to watch out for his lamb & sheep. Once the risen Christ takes care of our needs & brings us wonderful blessings, He wants us to pay forward & help others with their needs. That's what today's Gospel wants to remind us & encourage us to do as the disciples of the risen Christ.

Unfortunately, we've seen some Christians, especially our religious & political leaders who have forgotten about that duty these days. They would like the risen Christ to help them with their needs & bring them all the wonderful blessings. But, once the Lord has brought them those blessings & the divine help, they do not want to help anyone else especially the misfortunate. Similarly, our religious & political leaders cannot get to their powerful positions without the help from above. Sadly, once they've achieved their power & fame, they do not care about anyone else especially the poor & the lowly. That does not only disappoint our Lord but also creates the resentment & injustice in our society. It has also caused selfishness & indifference to the plight of the misfortunate. My friends, we've heard a lot about discrimination & prejudices in our society lately. People have blamed on various things & assumed that cutting financial support to the offenders would solve the problem. If it's that simple, all the prisons & death penalty that we've done for centuries would reduce most of our social problems. The fact is that it has not! So, let's try to reach out to help one another & share God's blessings for us with others around us. Maybe that will bring us a little more caring & peaceful community as the risen Christ has hoped for.

My dear brothers & sisters, our world was heading down the wrong path some years ago. But, our Lord did not hand it more punishments. Instead, our God sacrificed God's only son on the Cross for it & has continued to bring it more blessings every day. Likewise, we got to follow the same example & help our world fill up with more caring & compassionate acts. That's how we should deal with our current social problems & put an end to them. That's the real & long-lasting Easter miracle that we can show to our world.